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ABSTRACT

Divided into two sections, this document suggests a number of ways to work with power structures in developing a collaborative effort between business, education, labor, industry, and government. In section I, the author presents his own understanding of power (position power and individual power) and provides a theoretical framework for the actions described in section II. (This theoretical framework includes two basic elements which are needed in working with the power structure: knowledge of self and an understanding of the continual friction between old and new in every society or organization.) In section II, the author describes the process of forming a collaboration with the help of the power structure. The first step described in the process is thinking, a step which requires careful examination of thoughts and the strengthening of convictions. The second step described is to discuss these convictions with peers and trusted associates before presenting these beliefs to strangers. Finally, the author lists twelve guidelines to assist the educator in successfully involving outside groups in education. (BM)

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WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH THE COMMUNITY POWER STRUCTURE

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WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH THE POWER STRUCTURE

(Learning to Count to Ten the Old Way)

This presentation is organized into two sections. In Section I, I will give some background, a presentation of my understanding of power. In the second section I will give actions based upon this understanding that I trust will help you bring education, labor, business, industry and government together for the benefit of students. I believe that you too must have a theoretical framework on which you hang your actions and so I will begin with that section.

The younger generations today start counting from ten and end with "one", "blast-off." When you are beginning to work with the power structure in your area, you will need to count to ten as was done in pre-space age... beginning with one and ending with ten. The purpose of all of this is, of course, to help you hold your patience. As I say this, if certain people were here from Connecticut today, they would be doubled up with laughter on the floor. They know that my patience starts and ends before I can get any number out of my mouth. But this is perhaps one of the most crucial points you must understand and accept in working with the power structure: people are different and since you are a human being you too are different and must handle situations your own unique way. Whatever happens, do not give up on your efforts to bring people together because what you are about to enter into is fraught with frustrations, but ladened with benefits for students.

Frustrations are extremely difficult to live with unless of course you know yourself. If you know yourself, you will know your weaknesses and your strengths. One of the first things you need to do then in working with the power structure is to not only know yourself, but also <u>act</u> on that knowledge and find people who can provide balance to your actions. I want to stress

balance here and also explain what I mean by the word. I have people who are often my partners in "crime" and as such, they are my balance. Note I did not say calming influence, just balance. These people see other sides that I do not see in a situation and as a result, balance my actions with theirs. Now balance to me is important as I take it from nature where the law of the balance of nature is continually in operation. This is a dynamic balance. Certainly things, even violent things, happen in nature as all of nature's inhabitants move along Darwin's evolutionary pathway. Said another way, change is going to happen and you can either give direction to change or have it happen to you. I prefer the former as I believe we must be continually describing a good life and what that good life can hold for all people, especially students.

Looking at nature leads us to other considerations which are important when we work with the power structure. Power structures change just as nature changes. Life was extremely simple when one cell constituted all of life; life remained relatively simple in the guild era. In both cases, the power structure was relatively stable and quite simplistic in terms of working within it. But, do not forget that history has shown us that even in the era of kings there was often a counterpower move to overthrow the throne. The law of physics applies to society too: for every force in one direction, in this case power, there is an equal force in the opposite direction. Power is energy and it determines the direction the body, society, will take. As you form collaboratives between education, business, labor, industry and government, remember this law.

Simplicity is no longer our way of life. Just as our understanding of nature has changed and has grown more complex, so has our society. Therefore, the power structure has also changed. The power structure today is less stable, less well defined, less obvious, than in past years. Look at inter-

national relationships and how the balance of power is shifting. In another case, think of the life and death power, the ultimate power comparable to that held by kings and conquerors of past centuries, that oil has on marine and bird life today. These and many other cases of shifting power cause me to formulate an unwritten law: As living organizations, including organizations of people in societies and nations, grow larger and more complex, they must also become more intimately related, interrelated with each other if they are to survive. This law can be viewed either on a macro or micro basis. On a macro basis, look at international relationships again and how a third world war could start in some almost unknown to the western world country. On a micro basis, I see this law as the reason you are here: education, business, labor, government and other segments of our society have each gone their own way. As a result, problems are increasing. This cannot continue if the society is to survive. It is interesting to note that past wars united us as the Republic of China is now being united behind its Ten National Projects. However, our last war divided us and now we must reunite ourselves in some new way.

A second basic element to understand in working with the power structure can best be told by recalling the story of the grasshopper and the ant. You will recall the ant industriously stored food all fall while the grasshopper played its many games and teased the ant for working so hard. But then came winter and the ant survived in his warm house with all of his food while the grasshopper froze to death. Each society can be found on a continuum established by the ant and the grasshopper. We must be careful here not to fall into the typical American trap of being either/or, but recognize that continuums exist between two opposite poles. John Gardner perhaps said it best in terms of today's world when he wrote, "How to Prevent Organizational Dry

Rot," a few years ago. Briefly, what he said was that an organization must build in ways, operational ways, to insure that new ideas are continually fed into the organization. I am told that in Peter Drucker's latest management film he indicates that one of the functions of an organication's chief executive officer is to determine how many "kooks" the organization must have and can tolerate. Drucker and Gardner are saying the same thing but in different ways. This idea is found in any college freshman sociology book under the title of Institutionalization. Allow me to return to the ant and the grasshopper and perhaps over simplify institutionalization.

In New England, as elsewhere, there are four seasons. No two seasons are the same even though they can be called by the same name. Let me repeat that statement as it is extremely important: No two seasons are the same even though they can be called by the same name. While the names are the same, one union is not like another; one company is not like another; one school is not like another; etc. Within each name that is the same, there are many varieties and as many varieties, as you can think of in existence. Let us call spring the time when a vacuum or need is felt. People are tired of snow and the blossoming of the first flowers sends new life into bloodstreams; new life appears in many forms in many places. Summer becomes a time of growth and maturing for the new life; it is a hectic time because to grow demands consumption. Fall arrives and the ant stores food to survive the winter while the grasshopper continues his consumption pathway to obesity. But in fall, growth slows and even stops as the fruits of the labors of spring and summer are harvested. In too many cases these fruits are enjoyed to the point of obesity. But winter is ahead and unless revitalization plans are

made the fate of the grasshopper may be on hand; some things die and some things survive winter and from those who die, life still goes on in some form through offsprings, recycled deposits, etc. The picture I am trying to paint here is cyclical in nature. Let me return to my statement that I asked you to remember: no two seasons are the same even though they may be called by the same name. We have just finished winter. We know winter will return next year but we do not know how cold it will be. In New England we can predict that it will be cold. We cannot make exact predictions, but there are great similarities in the cycle of seasons. Nature exists in cycles too. If history is seen as the recalling of the existence of Man through life cycles, then some feelings, some predictions of the future are possible. If we are to predict these things though, we must see man's history in different terms than most people do now. Let me try to compress what I am saying by stating that there are three or four periods in a life cycle, even in an individual's life which begins with birth and ends with death; the same holds for society and organization and a person attempting to work with the power structure must understand that segments of our American society are old and dying while others are just being born. There is a continual point of friction between the old and the new; the birth and the death. The power structure and its interest in changing things, or keeping things status quo as is often the case, will be different in each case. Remember after World War II the statement that nothing was impossible, the impossible just took a little longer? How often do you hear that now in the United States?

Perhaps one of our history professors best stated this whole thing: The people in England still think of themselves as rulers of the British Empire when in fact they are a small, relatively weak, country on a small section of a small, isolated piece of a larger continent. The British Empire does not

exist anymore and even parts of it may separate one from the other such as in Canada's case. Think back in your own lifetime and count the empires that once existed, but are now dead. Think of the Roman Empire, think of empires close to home in the United States like those lost in the depression, come closer still and think of some of the empires close to your home or your place of work - the superintendent, president, manager, etc., that was recently fired. Empires come and go, but in a rapidly changing world, brought on by advanced technology, empires or organizations live through their four seasons at a much faster pace than they ever did in the past. The result of this is that we find difficulty in keeping up. We tend to think in the past and not in the future. Such a mind-set insures a faster death for an organization and as a result, even faster change in power structure. We let "future shock" control us rather than us controlling our future. McClelland, in the opening pages of his book, Achievement Motivation, talks of standing in what once was a world capital and, after observing the people and their society, stating that the people worked as hard as ever, but the world capital was no more. McClelland goes further to examine countries and various world locations and notes that geography cannot help explain why some countries work hard and make it while others, their neighbors, work equally hard but just do not have much success. Mix what I am saying with such titles as The Leaderless Vacuum, A Nation of Sheep and others. In many ways, we in American society are asleep, perhaps even in our winter and this affects power. We are like the young juvenile who had developed sexually, but does not have the maturity to handle the new feelings, instruments for sexual situations. Our power lives in the past and as a result, is truly not power.

There is one final part in this first section on working with the power structure. Again I go to nature. Man is an animal. Animals naturally use

power. Cows line up to come into the barn in a specific way. Add a new cow and there is friction, even fights before the right placement is found. The pecking order cliche is no accident; ever watch dogs play? Ever watch a husband and wife team at a social gathering? What about the Naked Ape; body language? If you think of it, both you and I can go on and on naming such titles and situations where power is present and observable.

For the purpose of our discussion today, let me indicate that there are at least two kinds of power that you will need to be concerned with: position power and individual power. But as each living thing, each season, is different, even though they are called by the same name, so is each kind of power. Think of the last four or five presidents of our country. There should be no question that they had power. Some had both personal and position power. But each was a living organism and thusly used power in differing ways. Enough of theory, now for action.

In this second section of the paper I will draw upon my own experiences and those of others that I have known or read about as they have worked with the power structure in their areas. Surprising as it may seem, the first action step in a program is thinking. It is a lonely step, but one you must go through if you are to meet with any success in forming a collaborative with the help of the power structure. During this process of thinking, I encourage you to write; write memos to yourself, short papers, whatever, but get your thoughts on paper because you will lose them if you do not do this. As you examine your thoughts, determine what you believe in and why you believe in it. Today I hope you and your team members are thinking of working with and through the power structure and developing a collaborative effort between education, business, labor, industry, government, etc. I hope

you and your teammates are talking about nothing else except how do you form a collaborative group in your own particular situation. Certainly sharing your thoughts with other people at this meeting will be one of the most helpful things that you can do. Perhaps the most important thing to conclude from your thinking is why you want to bring these often devisive groups together. From a personal bias, if you conclude that you believe in this action because your job depends on this mutuality, or, someone passed a law saying this was to happen, then please ignore what I am saying. If you have no higher convictions than your job or laws, then you will not succeed with the power structure; rather, you will be brought into line by power people. Do not forget that laws can be passed for a whole variety of reasons, including bad ones. Know what you want and why you want it. You can control what happens to you if you have a firm base of knowing what you want and yet keep an open mind to improvements in your thinking. Said another way, rigidity will insure your failure, just as much as lack of conviction will.

The second step is to begin to discuss your convictions with peers and people you trust. Trust is the key word here. You will have holes in your thinking and you need to plug as many of those holes as possible before venturing outside your trusted group. When you do feel secure with your beliefs, venture out into strange places. Write a short paper and ask different people to criticize it and your thoughts. If you are careful, you can also test the thinking of the groups you wish to bring together by sending the paper to various perceived power brokers. I would strongly recommend that after sending the paper that you meet with them, preferably over food, in a neutral place, to hear their thoughts on the subject. By now you will have learned

to count to ten because people will take your invitation as a means of righting all of the wrongs of education in general or of their own educational experiences in particular. Your function is to listen to their thoughts on collaboration, not their criticisms of education. I suggest here that you be assertive, but not defensive. You will need these contacts and friends later on. Often a first time attacker will become a friend after he or she has exhausted his or her agenda and still finds you coming back for more discussions. After all, your continued reappearance with some attackers gives that person a sense of power, if in no other area, at least in the personality power area.

During this process of thinking with strangers, you are really selling yourself and your concepts. You must be a salesman to work with power people as there must be a benefit for them too. This time consuming step of meeting new people on an individual basis and selling will have an impact on your thinking; it is an extremely crucial step. If you demonstrate that other people do count, then later when you call a large meeting, people will tend to attend because your ideas become their ideas. In a reverse way, I am saying do not call a mass meeting first and then expect things to follow naturally. You must lay the groundwork before successful meetings can be held. In fact, you must not only lay the groundwork, but you must insure that the outcome is favorable for collaborative efforts. After all collaboration has already begun in the micro settings here, lunches, etc., because both you and the others have shared ideas. Perhaps you have influenced each other.

In collaborative efforts, I suggest you consider doing the following things:

1. Meet on their turf! Turfdom is extremely important in the animal world and that includes the human world. The more secure the stranger is, the more likely it is that he or she will listen to you. Neutral ground and food are also acceptable first meeting items.
2. Be sensitive to other people. Learn to read body language. Learn what it is like to be in the other person's situation. Make sure that when you meet the stranger, your thoughts and information are organized and accurate.
3. Keep your eyeballs on the ceiling. This means that you must learn to become a third person and observe yourself and others as you operate in a social situation. Note power and social moves. Learn to conceptualize the whole scene: Scene I, the immediate situation; Scene II, the immediate mixed with the past to predict the future situation for individuals and organizations; Scene III, the roles individuals or organizations can and will assume in collaborative efforts. However, be wary of the politics among and between people and organizations. You can get trapped.
4. Realize that resistance to change, or the out of date thinking that I mentioned earlier is like the China Wall. But, every wall has cracks and what you need to do is find but one crack and quickly step through it to move organizations into collaborative agreements. In other words, a person inside making comments is worth two armies outside shouting the same words.
5. Develop and listen for networks of people. A business or union member may be also a town politician or the head of some club, church group, etc. His other-than-work group may wield other influence. Then too, the manager of one company will have a circle of friends who are managers of other companies. Friends and associates are more likely to listen to other

friends and associates. You will need people with credibility to support your ideas which, over time, can become their ideas if you sell them properly. Make sure these people with credibility gain credit for the ideas as they gain members for the collaborative effort.

Concurrent with the above you should:

1. Recognize the nature of your area: a corridor between two cities, a rural or urban area, an area in transition, etc. History has much to say about transportation and other demographic and ecological factors and their impacts upon people. All of these items have an impact on the power structure and its mode of thinking.
2. Watch the politics of the area and avoid being identified with any one side. However, recognize the power inherent in politics. If you can get both sides speaking for you, you will have a good power base.
3. Determine who are the visual power brokers. Know that real power may be hidden so develop a sensitivity to cues given by the visual power brokers. Ask careful questions about who decides what. Power likes more power or benefits. Therefore, as you sell collaboration, weave in benefits to decision makers.
4. Do not plan to always start at the top of the power block because what is seen as one block can in reality be many small blocks controlled by a hidden important someone. Start where you can and sell! Often a lower power figure can help make things happen without getting the top power broker involved.
5. Communicate! Keep your friends and enemies posted on what you are doing. Write letters to keep people informed, explaining the what and why of your actions for collaboration. Write newspaper columns on the topic,

especially in the free newspapers. I suggest this because many people who are homebound read free newspapers from cover to cover. These homebound people often have influence on power brokers. Get on radio and television, but watch the exposure so that the collaborative effort does not become your idea or you. Stress the collaborative successes of any groups, especially those in your area. There is nothing that breeds success like publicized success. Publicize the first successes of any group you get together.

6. Do not ignore labor. Too many educators make the mistake of calling on business and industry and ignoring labor because the former have been easily identified as powerful people. Union leaders are also powerful people as are the rank and file members. Let me remind you of the story of the coal strike with all of its happenings to bring this point out. Union people are often more concerned about education for the general public than some conservative businessmen. Use care here because with the right people you can get in the wrong situation: an anti union or anti business management split. If you find yourself caught in a difficult situation, remind the parties involved that you are not at the bargaining table, but are involving them for the good of the students.
7. Learn to count to ten. You will have bad experiences and periods of time where you will think all is lost. Keep the courage of your convictions! Just keep going. One thing power structures <u>cannot stand</u> is a force that will not give up. Remember the anti Vietnam War movement and President Johnson.

I have attempted to sensitize you to the changing nature of power and also give you some indicators that might be used to ascertain the power

structure in your area. From my experience, I have suggested a number of things you can do to work with power structures in developing a collaborative effort between business, education, labor, industry and government. Finally, I have suggested things you must do to and with yourself if you wish to be successful in your attempt to involve outside groups in education.

I have to admit though that my own personal mode of behavior is that if all else fails, use your whip and start counting up from eleven. We must move forward!